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THE GAMBIA.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR THE YEAR 31ST MAY, 1947.

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SECTION I.

AGRICULTURE IN THE COLONY AND PROTECTORATE.

METEOROLOGY.

1. Weather.—The rains in 1946 were a little above average and well distributed. They carried well in to October enabling the rice crop to mature satisfactorily.

They were late in starting in some areas which delayed the sowing and transplanting of rice.

Rainfall.

	1946.	Previous. average.	No. of years.
Cape St. Mary	41.84	44.02	11
Yoroberi Kunda	45.16	38.33	12
Wuli	43.45	43.65	17
Kerewan	47.98	43.80	11
Bwiam	48.30	41.32	1
Jenoi	46.39	1st year of recording.	
Kuntaur	44.86	,, ,, ,,	
Brikama	42.91	,, ,, ,,	

2. The late start of the rains in some areas did not seriously effect the crops even the late planted rice doing well. If anything it benefited the groundnuts as weed growth was not as prolific as in the areas with a normal rainfall.

3. General.—There was a hungry season over the whole of the Protectorate, due mainly to the partial failure of the late maturing grain crops caused by the early cessation of the rains in 1945.

4. Dry Grains.—Germination and growth was satisfactory and crops good but there is need for greater production to supply the non-food producing part of the population and provide a reserve for poor years.

5. Rice on the whole did well, especially on the tidal swamps in the middle river area. There is evidence that the use of this type of land is increasing. The demand for rice still exceeds the supply.

6. Vegetable production in the Protectorate continued to decline. The re-starting of the River Marketing Scheme should help to increase production again.

7. The growing of early maize and cassava is still on the increase. There has been a demand for planting material of the Sweet Potato.

8. Fruit Production.—The supply is very much below the demand, except perhaps for mangoes when in season.

A large number of young trees have been distributed but it will be some years before these come into bearing.

Export Crops.

9. The groundnut crop was estimated at 40—45,000 tons, the actual crop was 56,398 tons.

10. The reasons for the increase over the expected crop were:—

(*a*) Satisfactory and well distributed rainfall.

(*b*) Price and consumer goods on sale being tempting enough to cause nuts to be brought over the border from the French Colonies.

(*c*) Increase in the number of farmers due to demobilisation.

11. The price eventually paid for nuts was £16 per ton to the grower, or 4/- per bushel of 28 lbs.

12. The quality was good. The fixing of the dates to start reaping was left to the Native Authorities in consultation with the District Commissioners and Agricultural Officers and it worked satisfactorily.

13. In order to avoid a lack of seed 250 tons were reserved. This was distributed by the Group Firms this (1946) year and not by the Agricultural Department.

14. Palm Kernels.—The price went up to £12 10s. 0d. per ton delivered Bathurst. The producer getting 3/- per bushel. 1,291 tons were exported during 1946 valued at £18,587.

Pests and Diseases.

15. Brucid Beetle, Caryedon fuscus (Goeze) appears to be still spreading and affecting stored seed. It can be partly controlled by (1) storing in the open while the weather is dry, (2) destroying all old seed etc. before reaping the new crop, (3) cleaning out seed stores thoroughly and (4) packing the seed in dry sand or ashes. But without direct legislation it is difficult to enforce any of these practices.

16. No other pests or diseases were reported as being serious, apart from monkeys which are estimated to destroy 25% of the total crops each year.

SECTION II.

WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

17. During the year the Agricultural Adviser to the Gambia, Mr. R. R. Glanville, Director of Agriculture, Sierra Leone, paid two visits to the Gambia.

These were concerned primarily with the establishment of the Rice Station and the undertaking by the Agricultural Department of the agricultural work connected with the Human Nutrition Research Field Unit.

Food Production.

16. Though work on the establishment of the Rice Station was started very late in the season a small area was got under rice on the mangrove land and grass land adjoining the mangrove. Bunds have been built, drains dug, storerooms and temporary quarters erected.

19. The yields of rice obtained were low due to

(1) Number of roots in the soil.

(2) Salt depressions.

Average yield (Padi lbs/Ac.) Transplanted

Variety.	*Mangrove.*	*Grass land* (hoed).
D99	1,040	893
Lead	1,173	822
GEB 24	1,103	490

Yields varied as follows (lbs padi/Ac.)

Variety.	*Mangrove.*	*Grass land.*
D99	720 to 1,530	790 to 950
Lead	510 ,, 1,460	640 ,, 1,180
GEB 24	910 ,, 1,230	190 ,, 690

Other yields were Kav. 490 lbs and Alieu Ba 1430 lbs/Ac.

20. 550 bags of rice seed were imported from Sierra Leone and distributed throughout the Protectorate, made up of the following varieties:—

Lead	288 bags
GEB 24	155 ,,
Kav.	99 ,,
D99	8 ,,

21. 122 lbs of vegetable seeds were imported for sale and distribution. These included some American varieties brought in for trial under local conditions.

22. The local production of vegetable seed continued, results being fairly satisfactory with regards to French Beans, Lettuce (Cabbage and Cos) Tomatoes, Egg Plants, Peppers (Sweet and Hot), Onions and cucumber.

23. 1,265 Fruit and Economic trees and 1,873 ornamental shrubs and trees were distributed during the 1946 rains. These included some grafted kola and mango plants.

24. The Apiaries at Brikama and Yoroberi Kunda were maintained and honey and wax sold in Bathurst.

These demonstrations with double chambered hives and queen excluder do not seem to be having much influence on the local producer who more often than not robs the brood chamber when gathering the honey and wax often killing the bees in the process.

25. Experiments on local crops were carried out at the Yoroberi Kunda Experimental Farm and are briefly tabulated below:—

(*a*) Guinea Corn, Gwendo gave a significantly better yield than Basso. While a small plot of Nigeran Guinea Corn (Red) gave a much higher than either of these.

(*b*) Groundnuts. There was no significant difference between Sir Charles and Basso (locally selected seed).

(*c*) Various grasses and fodder crops are being tried out with the intention of putting most of the farm under pasture, increasing the Dairy herd, and running the farm on a rotation including a long grass fallow.

26. Three varieties of rice were grown on riverside flats at Sankuli Kunda. Yields per acre were:—

G.C.	1,394 lbs.
D'jougoutes	2,215 ,,
Sugandi	668 ,,

Alkama wheat planted after the rice averaged 328 lbs/Ac.

MAINTENANCE OF FERTILITY AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY.

27. Mixed Farming.—As stated in the last report this has not been successful in the Gambia on account of sickness amongst the cattle, mainly due to trypanosomiasis breaking out as soon as they are called on to do any heavy work. As a consequence we are concentrating on mechanical cultivation and pasture improvement.

28. The Scheme to settle Ex-servicemen on the land in the hope that they would practice mixed-farming has not been very successful. Cattle were trained and delivered to them along with ploughs.

" Cattlemen instructors " visited them on their farms to continue instruction and rewards were offered for the most successful farms. In the majority of cases the men were not " Cattle-minded " and expected the instructors to do everything including looking after the animals, and once these men were withdrawn very little was done. Some of the animals died and some were stolen.

Of the 50 men originally selected 25 started farming and two qualified for rewards at the end of the first season.

29. Piggeries.—The small piggery at Fajara has been closed down, as was proposed in last year's report, and a small herd retained at Yoroberi Kunda where they are doing well, mainly on account of the supply of skimmed milk available from the dairy. The animals are starting to get interbred and some new blood must be obtained soon.

30. Dairy Industry.—7,992 lbs of butter was produced during the period under review compared with 3,067 lbs in the previous year and 1,200 the year before that.

271 lbs of clarified butter fat were also produced, this was necessary on account of the shortage of cold storage space.

We are still short of equipment and operating with home made churn and pasturising equipment.

As soon as equipment is available further buying and separating units will be established.

31. Mechanical Cultivation.—A start was made with the old implements mentioned in last year's report and a second-hand tractor obtained from the Air Ministry Department of Works. The tractor proved to be on the " light " side for the swamp soils but a small area was ploughed and harrowed at the Rice Station before the rains and sown with rice.

Some of the land it was tried on was the " salt grass land " and here results were disappointing as when the rains ceased the land turned salty before the crop was mature. Trials on the rain water swamps (Banta Farra) were a little more successful.

Lack of water control resulted in poor germination in some plots and excess flooding in others. Also the ploughing was too late for satisfactory weed control.

Yields varied from 139 to 892 lbs/Ac. the average being 434 lbs.

32. Some new equipment ordered through the Human Research Field Unit, which is operating in the Gambia, arrived in May of this year and it is hoped to have at least 30 acres at the Rice Station under mechanical cultivation this year.

EXPORT CROPS AND PRODUCE INSPECTION.

33. Groundnuts.—The nuts this year were of good quality free from immature and mouldy kernels. Steps were taken to see that screening at the buying stations was properly carried out so as to eliminate sand.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

34. During the year there have been 3 pupils at the Vocational School at Yoroberi Kunda and one at the Rice Station, Jenoi.

Progress has been slow, the average boy applying for training in Agriculture having a very low standard of education and a lot of time has to be spent teaching them subjects they should have known before joining the Department.

With the increased salaries now being offered following the Harragin Commission's recommendations it is hoped that boys with a higher standard of education will now apply for training.

35. Dry Season Produce Shows.—Three shows were held during the year at Georgetown, Kristi Kunda and Sukuta.

36. Staff.—Mr. T. J. Stevens, Agricultural Officer proceeded on leave 23rd July, 1946 and returned 13th December, 1946. Mr. R. A. Kitching, Agricultural Officer proceeded on leave 27th November, 1946 and returned 8th May, 1947. Mr. T. F. Blood, Agricultural Officer proceeded on leave 6th February, 1947. Mr. J. H. Palmer, Senior Agricultural Officer proceeded on leave 18th May, 1947. Mr. P. A. Donovan was appointed to the Gambia as an Agricultural Officer 13th November, 1946.

37. The European staff of the Department on 31st May, 1947 consisted of:—

Mr. J. H. Palmer, Senior Agricultural Officer.
,, T. J. Stevens, Agricultural Officer.
,, R. A. Kitching, ,, ,,
,, T. F. Blood, ,, ,,
,, P. A. Donovan, ,, ,,

Two vacancies remain to be filled.

SECTION III.

Omitted.

SECTION IV.

38. Legislation.—None directly affecting Agriculture was effected during the period under review.

R. A. KITCHING,
Acting Senior Agricultural Officer.